

Message Text

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CORRECTED COPY (TEXT PARA 1. CORRECTED)

USIA FOR IEU

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CSCE, PINT, SCUL, SHUM, CZ
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA--A POST-BELGRADE ASSESSMENT

1. A FORMER CHARLES UNIVERSITY POLITICAL SCIENCE PROFESSOR, WHO HAD ORIGINALLY TOLD THE PAO THAT CHARTER 77 WOULD BE ISSUED SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE THAT HUMAN RIGHTS APPEAL BECAME PUBLIC, STOPPED BY THE LATTER'S APARTMENT FOR A POST-BELGRADE ASSESSMENT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CLIMATE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA MARCH 13.

2. "THE RESULTS ARE NOT AS NEGATIVE FOR EASTERN EUROPE AS THE WESTERN PRESS MAKES THEM OUT TO BE," HE SAID, ADDING, "IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, WHICH HAS A WESTERN LEGAL TRADITION, THE ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS ALWAYS THERE, JUST BENEATH THE SURFACE. THE HELSINKI AND BELGRADE CONFERENCES RAISED IT AS A PUBLIC AND GLOBAL ISSUE, NOW IT WILL REVERT TO BEING A CONTINUING PROBLEM, EVEN IF IT IS NOT A MATTER OF CONSTANT POLITICAL ATTENTION."

3. "HUMAN RIGHTS," HE CONTINUED, WAS ALIVE AS A PROBLEM BEFORE BELGRADE, AND IT WILL CONTINUE TO EXIST AFTERWARDS. THE
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IMPORTANCE OF CHARTER 77 AND THE BELGRADE CONFERENCE IS THAT IT FULLY RAISED THE ISSUE FOR A GENERATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKS. NO ONE IS THE SAME AS HE WAS BEFORE. ALL HAVE BEEN FORCED TO CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS AND TAKE A POSITION ON THEM."

4. AS FOR THE SOVIET UNION'S EFFORTS AT BELGRADE, THE FORMER MEMBER OF A GOVERNMENTAL ECONOMIC REFORMS STUDY GROUP SAID:

"EVERYONE KNEW THE SOVIET UNION WAS GOING TO BELGRADE WITH ONE INTENTION, TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM THE HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTION. THE SOVIETS SUCCEEDED IN DOING THIS, BUT IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THEY AGREED TO MEET AGAIN IN TWO YEARS TO CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS. I DO NOT THINK THE SOVIETS REALIZE HOW LITTLE THEY GOT FROM THE HELSINKI CONFERENCE. ALL THE REST OF THE WORLD HAS TO DO IS KEEP POINTING TO THE UNFULFILLED BASKET III PROVISIONS, AND THE ONLY THING THE SOVIETS CAN SAY IS "INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF A SOCIALIST STATE."

5. THE IMPOVERISHED FORMER CZECHOSLOVAK ACADEMICIAN WHO EARNS A LIVING TRANSLATING BOOKS UNDER OTHER TRANSLATOR'S NAMES, SAID HIS GUARDED OPTIMISM ABOUT THE BELGRADE CONFERENCE'S OUTCOME DIFFERED SHARPLY FROM THAT OF MANY COLLEAGUES WHO MEET FOR WEEKLY DISCUSSIONS AT WHAT HAS COME TO BE INFORMALLY KNOWN AS THE "JAN PATOCKA FREE UNIVERSITY"--NAMED FOR THE DECEASED CHARTER SPOKESMAN WHO SUFFERED A FATAL HEART ATTACK LAST YEAR AFTER POLICE INTERROGATION. HE SAID MANY ACTIVIST CZECHOSLOVAK INTELLECTUALS WANTED TO PUBLISH A DETAILED WHITE PAPER LISTING GOC AND SOVIET HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, AND TO HAVE IT CIRCULATED AT BELGRADE

SUCH A DOCUMENT WOULD HAVE HAD IMMEDIATE SHOCK VALUE, HE REASONED, BUT WOULD HAVE BROUGHT SWIFT REPRISALS FROM THE GOC AND WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN WORTH THE EFFORT, AS MOST OF THE INFORMATION HAS ALREADY BEEN REPORTED IN THE WESTERN PRESS. "PRESIDENT CARTER HAS

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VERY LITTLE MARGIN OF MANUVERABILITY ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN EASTERN EUROPE," THE FORMER PROFESSOR SAID, "BUT HE DOES HAVE SOME POSSIBILITIES. THE TRICK IS TO KNOW WHAT TO DO WHEN."

6. IN THIS REGARD, THE SOURCE SAID HE DIFFERED FROM BOTH HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS, JIRI HAJEK, WHO SAID KEEP THE PRINCIPLES ALIVE AND AVOID MENTIONING SPECIFIC CASES, AND MILITANT PLAYWRIGHT PAVEL KOHOUT, WHO ONCE TOLD THE PAO, "KEEP MENTIONING US AND OUR SITUATION ON VOA, OTHERWISE THE WORLD WILL FORGET US AND THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE FREE TO DO WHAT IT WANTS TO WITH US." THIS SOURCE DESCRIBED HAJEK AS A TRADITIONAL MARXIST THEORIST WHO HAS INCREASINGLY LOST TOUCH WITH EVOLVING POLITICAL REALITIES IN EASTERN EUROPE AND WESTERN EUROPE. KOHOUT, HE BELIEVES, IS SOMETHING OF A SELF-PUBLICIST. "EACH HUMAN RIGHTS CASE WILL BE DIFFERENT," HE SAID, "IN SOME DISCUSSIONS YOU WILL WANT TO REFER TO LEGAL AND HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS, IN OTHERS IT WOULD BE WISE TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION OF AN INDIVIDUAL. THERE IS NO HARD FAST RULE."

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7. ON THE HUSAK GOVERNMENT, HE FELT "THERE IS MORE TALK OF CHALLENGING THE PRESIDENT THAN AT ANY TIME SINCE HE TOOK OFFICE. IT IS TRIGGERED MAINLY BY THE BAD STATE OF OUR ECONOMY, AND THE HARDLINERS ARE AMONG HUSAK'S CLEAREST CRITICS." HE SAID HE DID NOT THINK ANYONE OR FACTION OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE HAD THE POWER

TO DEPOSE HUSAK, UNLESS IT WAS THE RUSSIANS' WILL, BUT IN THE PRESENT UNCLEAR SITUATION, HUSAK'S REACTIONS HAVE BEEN TO SHOW HIS POWER AND TO TAKE NO MEASURES THAT MIGHT PROVOKE INSTABILITY. "CULTURALLY, THE LAST YEAR HAS BEEN A TIGHT ONE," HE SAID, ADDING, "BY NOW THE UNOFFICIAL CULTURAL COMMUNITY HAS STABILIZED. THERE IS A WIDELY CIRCULATING LITERATURE OF SAMIZDAT. FOR INSTANCE, LAST WEEK WE PUBLISHED IN HANDTYPED MANUSCRIPTS AN ANTHOLOGY OF CONTEMPORARY CZECHOSLOVAK POETRY THAT COULD NOT BE PUBLISHED IN ANY OTHER FORM. PLAYWRIGHTS NOW COMPOSE SMALL PIECES FOR A FEW ACTORS THAT CAN BE PERFORMED IN ONE ANOTHER'S HOMES; ARTISTS HOLD EXHIBITIONS IN THEIR STUDIOS FOR OTHER ARTISTS FOR THE FIRST TIME. ALL HAVE GIVEN UP ON HOPES FOR ANY RADICAL CHANGES IN THE OFFICIAL ATTITUDE TOWARD CREATIVE INTELLECTUALS. THIS PERSONALLY DISTURBS THE MINISTER OF CULTURE, KLUSAK, WHO REGRETS THAT SO MUCH OF THE COUNTRY'S

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TALENT CANNOT BE SHOWN IN PUBLIC, BUT THERE IS NOTHING HE CAN DO ABOUT IT."

8. COMMENT: THIS MODEST AND LONG-TERM EVALUATION OF

RESULTS OF THE BELGRADE CONFERENCE, PROBABLY SHARED BY OTHER
CHARTER 77 ADHERENTS, CONTRASTS SHARPLY WITH BOTH THE DISAPPOINTMENT
OF SOME LOCAL INTELLECTUALS THAT NOT MORE OF A TANGIBLE
NATURE WAS ACHIEVED, AND THE GOC'S OFFICIAL
POLEMICS WHICH, UNTIL NOW, HAVE SEEN THE CHIEF
SUCCESS OF THE CONFERENCE AS FENDING OFF THOSE WHO, IN
THE WORDS OF GOC AMBASSADOR RICHARD DVORAK, WOULD "INTERFERE
IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES." BUT
EVEN THAT IDEOLOGICAL CHEERLEADER OF COMMUNIST CAUSES,
RUDE PRAVO'S DUSAN ROVENSKY, AFTER HE HAD ECHOED DVORAK'S
ACCOUSING THE WEST OF ENGAGING IN "PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE
AND SMEAR CAMPAIGNS AGAINST SOCIALIST COUNTRIES," HAD A
POSITIVE COMMENT ON THE BELGRADE MEETING. HE SAID THE FINAL
DOCUMENT REFLECTS A CONSENSUS OF COMPETING POLITICAL SYSTEMS AND
"DESPITE DIFFERENCES IN APPROACH, THE PROCESS OF EASING
TENSIONS WILL CONTINUE." THE VIEW OF BELGRADE, AMONG
SOME PRAGUE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS AND GOVERNMENT COMMENTATORS,
IS ONE OF MODERATE, HIGHLY QUALIFIED SUCCESS.

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